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**THE SOCIAL WORSHIP OF THE ONE GOD
AGREEABLE TO REASON AND SCRIPTURE.**

J. White

A SERMON,

PREACHED

IN THE CHAPEL,

IN PRINCE'S-STREET, WESTMINSTER,

SUNDAY, MARCH XXVII, MDCCXCVI:

ON UNDERTAKING THE PASTORAL OFFICE IN THAT

PLACE.

BY THOMAS JERVIS.

L O N D O N:

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СОД ЕСКЕ БЫТ ТО МОНГАЛ МОНГОЛСЫН
САЛАНДЫРЧИЙН АДАМОСЫН ОТ КАЧАЛСЫН.

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S E R M O N.

JOHN iv. 23.

THE HOUR COMETH, AND NOW IS, WHEN THE TRUE WORSHIPPERS SHALL WORSHIP THE FATHER IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH. FOR THE FATHER SEEKETH SUCH TO WORSHIP HIM.

MEN of learning and ingenuity have frequently exercised their talents in disquisitions upon the subject of social worship. And some, disgusted and dissatisfied with the various modes in which it has usually been conducted, have rejected all institutions for this purpose. They have accordingly shewn no inconsiderable degree of industry in adducing arguments that may tend to justify their own conduct in this respect. And no wonder that, in an age when the public mind is wholly occupied by secular considerations, or agitated by political

discussions, an age of which we cannot give a more pertinent and characteristic description, than in the words applied by the apostle to the Athenians of old, who “ spent their time in nothing else than either to tell or to hear some new thing”—no wonder, in an age like the present, that many, and especially young persons, should be found ready to adopt their arguments, and to follow their example, by totally laying aside all public worship, under any modification of its external forms. To this neglect men may be determined by various motives ; some by the desire of novelty, and some by the subtleties and refinements of theory ; but more by the love of pleasure, by the habits of indolence, or by a disinclination and indifference to religious pursuits in general. It is scarcely necessary for me here to observe, that, as no human system is perfect, so perhaps there is no mode of worship which may not be liable to some objection. But, I ask, is it the part of a wise man, from the imperfection or from the abuse of any scheme, to infer its absolute inutility ? Or, will the fair and candid inquirer after truth altogether renounce the worship of God, because in the practice of men it has been mixed and corrupted by gross errors and superstitions ?

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The controversy upon this subject may, upon the whole, be considered as having done no disservice to the cause of truth and religion. It has satisfied the doubts of many; it has convinced the calm and rational part of the christian world, that the external rites of worship, when directed by just principles and views, and wisely and judiciously arranged, are actually productive of the habits of piety and virtue. It should seem that one advantage, at least, may result from the discussion: we may hence be induced to reform what we perceive to be improper or unworthy in the prevailing mode of conducting the public offices of devotion; we may be led to adopt a purer and a chaster system, to study a greater degree of simplicity and correctness in the performance of these duties, so as to render our religious worship more free from superstition and enthusiasm, more consonant to reason and scripture, and more worthy of that being who is the great object of worship.

But, upon this subject, we are to seek light and information from the highest and most venerable authority. Jesus Christ, the great founder of our religion, and the immediate messenger of God to men, has taught us how to think, and how to act on this important

point. He has not, indeed, expressly enjoined the duty of social worship ; but he has in effect done more ; he has considered it as a matter universally allowed and acknowledged, and about which there could be no just and reasonable doubt. He has accordingly contented himself with giving general directions for the conduct and regulation of it.* And here I shall refer you particularly to that instructive lesson which he has left us in his memorable dialogue with the woman of Samaria.

Her curiosity having been wonderfully awakened by the knowledge which Jesus had discovered, in this conversation, of some peculiar circumstances of her life ; she avails herself of this opportunity to ask the opinion of this sagacious and extraordinary person, whom she now concludes to be a prophet, in regard to the controversy which had long been agitated between her countrymen and the jews, concerning the proper place in which men ought to worship God ; whether on Mount Gerizim, as the Samaritans supposed ; or in the temple at Jerusalem, for which the jews strenuously contended. “ Jesus says to her, woman, believe me, the hour is coming when this

* See Matt. vi. 5, &c.

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this shall no longer be a question among you; when ye shall worship the father neither on this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem; when a new and better order of things shall take place; when those rites and ordinances which are now observed by you shall be superseded; when a more pure and spiritual mode of worship shall be introduced, under which you will have no regard to local circumstances, since one place cannot be in fact more sacred than another. Your sentiments also will be rectified in respect to the great object of worship, of whom your present notions are extremely confused and imperfect. Ye worship ye know not what. But we of the Jewish nation, though we have neglected to improve our superior light and instructions, have however enjoyed clearer information upon this subject: Nay, the salvation which God has promised to the world, is to originate with the Jews; for amongst us the Messiah, whose advent you in common with us have long been waiting for, now makes his appearance. Be assured, therefore, that the hour is coming, and now is just arrived, when all true worshippers shall worship the father, not by types and shadows, not with outward rites and ceremonies, but with inward truth and sincerity of heart. Such rational worshippers

only will be acceptable to God ; and such alone he seeks, who shall worship him in a manner more suitable to the purity and spirituality of his nature, and more conducive to their own consolation, improvement and advantage. For God is a spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth."

I shall now make some observations that may tend further to elucidate the true spirit and meaning of the text, and to correct and regulate our notions with respect to that pure worship which alone is acceptable to God.

And, in the first place, it is evident from the words of Jesus Christ, that homage or worship is a duty we all owe to God our maker.

It is not my design, at present, to enter into a formal defence of social worship. This argument has already been ably handled, and the principle fully established to the satisfaction of the impartial and unprejudiced mind. I shall rather treat it, therefore, as a duty implied and generally admitted, for which we plead a sanction and authority in the universal practice of the christian church from the earliest ages ; and shall now consider myself as addressing a society of christians,

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christians, who do not call in question the propriety and expediency of public worship; nay, who are convinced and satisfied that it is an act of homage and allegiance indispensably due from man to God, the common parent of the human race.

Some men have indeed denied the obligation to this duty, in the warmth of their zeal for the cause of infidelity; for there are bigots, visionaries, and enthusiasts in this cause, as well as on the side of superstition and credulity. And some ingenious speculatists and honest inquirers it is true there are, who, though they do not see the argument for social worship in the same light that we do, yet are not on that account to be censured by us. But of such the number is comparatively small. It is much to be lamented, that the practice for which we are now contending, is greatly disregarded by the vulgar and illiterate; yet this is the less to be wondered at, when we observe that too many of those in the higher ranks of life are deficient in shewing them the example of a decent propriety and regularity in this respect. It may, notwithstanding, be asserted, that the great mass of mankind have agreed, as it were by general consent, to render to the creator of all beings the tribute of adoration and

and praise. And this observation will apply particularly to the thinking and considerate part of the world; to many of the best informed, the most learned, and the most truly enlightened; and generally speaking, to all those, whose minds have not been warped and misled by the imposing arts and the sophistical reasonings of a vain philosophy, infected by the contagion of vicious pleasures, degraded by the narrow views of interest and avarice, or deluded by the false splendor of worldly greatness and ambition. The wisest and the worthiest among men have usually experienced the highest satisfaction and advantage in that intercourse with the deity which is maintained and cherished by religious worship. The most elegant and accomplished minds have acknowledged the refined pleasure that attends the cultivation of the devotional taste, when regulated by reason, and governed by the understanding. The generous and feeling heart is never more susceptible of the luxury of intellectual enjoyment, than when elevated by the contemplation of the divine perfections, employed in celebrating the high praises of God, imploring his kind condescension and regard, or dissolved in sentiments of the warmest gratitude and affection, of profound veneration, of well-founded confidence, and animating hope.

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And where can the soul of sensibility find such exhaustless sources of tenderness, delight, and joy, as in the exercises of a rational and manly devotion? where can the capacious mind of man find such ample scope for its energies and powers, as in the study and contemplation of the works and ways of God, which will furnish the noblest motives to his praise? And, as social worship is the object we have now more immediately in view, how must the exalted pleasures of piety and benevolence be augmented, diffused and extended, while the true worshippers "go to the house of God in company," and join together as with one heart and one mind, with perfect harmony and unity of spirit, in the exercises of social religion! The powers of sympathy unite the affections of all; the elevated sentiments of devotion are kindled in every breast; the eyes and the hearts of all are directed to one and the same great being, whose presence is universal, whose providence rules the world, and whose bounty supplies the exigencies of all his creatures. Then let us "enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise:" let us, in the exercise of all holy and devout affections, and "with our whole hearts praise the Lord in the assembly of the upright, and

in the congregation." Great God ! we rejoice in the belief of thine existence ; we rejoice in the contemplation of thy unrivalled perfections. We exult in the sublime and animating thought, that such a being as thou art presides in the universe, seated on a throne of righteousness and mercy, arrayed in the splendors of immortality, enshrined in imperishable glory ! We acknowledge thy benignity and truth in all thy dispensations towards the children of men. We esteem it our indispensable and everlasting duty to worship thee, our creator, the constant witness, and the unerring and impartial judge of our actions. And we look up to thee with all the consolation and plenitude of hope, in the assurance that thou art the faithful guardian of the just, the unchanging friend of the righteous, the equitable rewarder of them that diligently seek thee.

Let it be further remarked, that our divine master has instructed us in the nature of that true worship which is acceptable to God.

The worship taught by Jesus Christ, is pure and spiritual, and of the most liberal and comprehensive nature ; it is intended to unite persons of all nations, and of all descriptions, without distinction

distinction of parties, or speculative opinions. Men are too apt to imagine, that their own country, their own church, their own liturgy or formulary of devotion, their own creed or articles of belief, are the only just criteria by which to determine the rectitude of other men's faith, to estimate the validity of their pretensions, or the genuineness of their religious profession. The narrow prejudices of the Jews and Samaritans, who "had no dealings" with each other, no friendly intercourse or communication, who interchanged no offices of kindness or hospitality, but cherished a rooted and inveterate dislike to each other—these prejudices were strongly censured and condemned by our lord. And such prejudices are surely most unworthy of that generous and benevolent dispensation which he came to establish in the world. It was the design of christianity, not to make partisans, not to advance the interests of any particular church, of any sect or body of men whatsoever. It has a nobler, a more enlarged, disinterested, and glorious object in view. It is the tendency of its institutions to break down the partition-wall that separates between men of various descriptions, to throw wide open the door of christian charity to those of all persuasions, of all countries, of all languages,

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and of all complexions, whether circumcised or uncircumcised, whether barbarian, scythian, bond or free. It is to enlarge the number of genuine and rational worshippers of the one true God and Father of our lord Jesus Christ ; to add to the number of them that shall be saved ; and to shew that “ God is no respecter of persons ; but that, in every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness,” whether Jew or Samaritan, Pagan, Mahometan, or Christian, “ is accepted with him.” The Christian indeed has much higher advantages for attaining to the knowledge of God, than others ; but his merit will be appreciated, not by his superior advantages, but by the use he has made of them, and the manner in which he has improved them ; and his recompence will be apportioned and regulated by the conformity of his conduct to the salutary laws of the gospel. And if he neglects or misapplies the privileges he enjoys, the greater in proportion, and the more aggravated will be his condemnation. A man’s real and intrinsic worth does not consist in the soundness of his faith, but the orthodoxy of his life ; not in the extent or vigor of his understanding, but in the goodness and rectitude of his heart. Wherever, therefore, you meet with one who worships God with genuine simplicity of heart, whose

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whose conduct is governed by the laws of truth, integrity and honour, and whose heart is fraught with the genuine sentiments and affections of humanity and benevolence; whether he be of the straitest of our sect, or whether he does, or does not, come up to the standard of liberality which we may have arrogantly set up according to the rule of our own imperfect ideas; in short, whatever be his religious creed—embrace that man as a brother; attach him to your friendship; receive him into the confidence and communion of your hearts; and in the christian fellowship of social worship, unite with him in offering up the grateful tribute of your prayers to the father of all beings.

Again, the true worship which christianity inculcates, is not local, or confined to any particular place or situation. There is no place in which God exclusively resides. He is confined to no region, no part of his immense creation. Who then shall build an house for God, seeing the heaven, the heaven of heavens cannot contain him? He dwelleth not in temples made with hands: the habitation of his glory is invisible to mortal eye; and he fills the unbounded infinity of space. Heaven is but his throne; and the earth is only his footstool;

footstool ; the world is his altar ; and the universe is the temple of God. In this magnificent, august, and stupendous temple, all his works praise him ; and heaven and earth unite in one grand chorus to celebrate his majesty and his excellent greatness. Nor may we, his intelligent offspring, neglect to join in the exalted theme of his praise. In this oratory of his universal church, this modest house of prayer, we, the objects of his mercy, are under peculiar obligations to love and adore him. For here we rejoice in the communications of his favour. Then, “ give unto the Lord, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength ; give unto the Lord the glory due to his name ; bring an offering, and come into his courts. Exalt him in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders.”

But, says our lord, “ believe me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem shall ye worship the father.” When Christ came into the world, it was one important object of his mission, for ever to abolish the local worship of the temple, whether on Gerizim or on Moriah. From that period, it became a matter of perfect indifference in what

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place we assemble to worship the God of our fathers. Happily we are not obliged, like the ancient jews, by long and toilsome pilgrimages, to seek his presence on his holy hill of Sion. His glory is every where diffused throughout the wide extent of the creation. He knows no distinction of places. In his all-comprehensive view, the grandeur or the meanness of the edifice is equally insignificant. The majestic dome, the lofty turrets, the stately columns, the spacious and the vaulted aisles can no more than the lowly shed attract his notice, or determine the place of his habitation. If we worship him in spirit and in truth, our offerings will be accepted by him, from whatever altar they ascend : and wherever there is an intelligent being, wherever there is a sincere and devout worshipper, there God has a temple. We have cause to rejoice, that he is not far from every one of us ; he is in the midst of us, and condescends to dwell with us ; his temple, his peculiar dwelling is in the heart of the righteous ; and he has no residence more venerable than the honest and the upright mind. Here “ incense is offered to his name, even a pure offering.”

Once more, the worship which is acceptable to God, does not consist in external forms, or

in the parade of ceremonious rites. These were at first ordained in compliance with the prejudices of the multitude, and in conformity to the weakness of human nature, with a view to lead men to the worship of God; as children are trained to virtue by the habits of early and regular discipline. But mankind soon began vainly to imagine, that a rigid and scrupulous observance of these would compensate for the want of inward purity and sincerity. And we find that this error has prevailed as notoriously among those who are called christians, as among the jews. But it is incumbent upon us, while we boast of superior degrees of knowledge and information, not to encourage superstition, nor give countenance to popular and long-established prejudices; but to do all we can to remove the abuses and corruptions which have obtained in the world, and tarnished the lustre and deformed the beautiful simplicity of the true and rational worship of God. These abuses and corruptions it was the design of the christian dispensation to reform.

The author of the epistle to the Hebrews* clearly intimates, that the rites and cere-

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* Chap. ix. 9.

monies, which were appointed by the Jewish dispensation, were not effectual to make the performer of religious services perfect, in regard to conscience; but were ordained only till the world was prepared for the arrival of that happier period when God in his infinite wisdom would see fit to establish a purer institution, one better calculated to reform the errors and vices of mankind. And even during the continuance of that former dispensation, we find God himself frequently correcting the mistakes of men in regard to his worship; and long before he spake to mankind by his Son, in effect asserting, that he would be "worshipped in spirit and in truth."—"Bring no more vain oblations, says he; incense is an abomination unto me: your new moons and sabbaths and your appointed feasts my soul hateth." He is "not pleased with thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil;" but he has declared, that "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken, than the fat of rams."

Can we for a moment imagine, that he "delights in burnt-offerings?—To what purpose are the multitude of our sacrifices to him?" What are to him the most costly and ostentatious rites, the most superb and magnificent appearances, and all the holy pomp of an

external devotion? What are to him the solemn temples, the most splendid decorations, the harmonious choir, "the voice of singing men and singing women, and the organ's grand and animating peal?" To the God we worship, there is nothing great, excellent, or beautiful, but virtue; there is no music like the harmony of a good life; no melody like that of a pure and grateful heart. To him the most odoriferous perfumes are not so fragrant, as the holy aspirations of the mind; and whoso offers him the praises of the heart, and the incense of a well-ordered conversation, glorifies him more truly, and worships him more acceptably, than he who sacrifices innumerable victims upon his altars, and devotes to his honor the cattle on a thousand hills.

We are told, that the modest "publican went down to his house justified rather than" the proud pharisee, with all his negative pretences to religion. The vaunting and arrogant presumption of the latter was displeasing to God; while the earnest, unassuming address of the former was acceptable, because it was the language of unfeigned penitence and contrition. The father of our spirits will not reject the supplication of the meanest of his creatures, when offered up in simplicity and truth: he will receive the sigh of the penitent; he will revive

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the spirit of the humble. The prayer that arises from the dust he will not disdain to hear. The vows of the despised hottentot, when proceeding from an honest heart, will find favour in the sight of God, rather than the formal and constrained services of the pretended, hypocritical, or unworthy professor of christianity. And

“ The poor Indian, whose untutor'd mind

“ Sees God in clouds, or hears him in the wind;”

who, unskilled in nice theological distinctions, and the oppositions of science, falsely so called, yet adores the great spirit who resides in some unseen region beyond his native hills, and prostrates himself before “ the unknown God,” the earth his altar, his canopy the sky—even he, may feel more of the fervor of true devotion, than the nominal christian, or the fastidious and philosophizing sceptic.

In treating of the duty of social worship, it has now been presumed, that christians in general acknowledge the peculiar obligations they are under to the practice of it, and that they will not lightly forsake the assembling themselves together for this purpose. It has been admitted, that in consideration of the imperfect state of human nature, some outward form of devotion is necessary to keep alive a sense of God and religion in the world, and to promote the

habitual exercise of those pure and virtuous affections which are the foundation of all true piety. But it has been the principal object of this discourse to rectify the mistaken notions of men upon this subject, and to maintain that the mode of worship must be as simple as possible; and that no ritual observances can by any means be substituted in the place of moral virtue, which consists in action, not in speculation; in reality, and not in appearance.

Had we time to enlarge, many important observations might be deduced from the doctrine of the text which I have endeavoured to illustrate. We see, in general, that the worship which God requires and approves, is not a local worship; for it bears no relation to any particular place, and is confined to no region of the universe; since God is worthy to be praised in every part, and in all places of his boundless dominions. It does not consist in corporeal ordinances, which may be called the mere pageantry of worship; nor in the vain show and grimace of sanctity, which is only the mask and the disguise of true devotion. But we must approach our maker with a pure heart fervently, not only with our bodies, but our spirits, which are his; not only in the outward act of homage, but more especially with the inward devotion

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of the mind. It will avail us nothing to cry, Lord, Lord, with all the fanatical heat and ardor of a forced and artificial devotion; unless our worship be conducted with a view to our advancement in rectitude and virtue. For he is not a true worshipper, " who is one outwardly; but he who is one inwardly;" and real religion " is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter." It does not require a parade and multitude of words; for we cannot expect to be heard for our much speaking. God is in heaven, and we upon earth, therefore let our words be few and simple, modest, humble, and sincere. The devotional spirit is not expressed by a studied display of eloquence; it finds a more affecting utterance in the simple and artless language of the heart. And, " though we speak with the tongues of men and of angels," though we be ever so fluent, or frequent, or apparently earnest and devout in the performance of our religious services; yet, without a strict and conscientious regard to the rules of temperance, justice and humanity, all our pretences to devotion are vain, and will profit us nothing. True worship is of a refined and spiritual nature; and the mode of it must be directed by reason, and animated by a principle of sincere and undissembled piety. And if the exercises of it produce in us the true graces and accomplishments of human nature, if they lead

us to unaffected humility and probity, to habits of piety to God, and benevolence to man; then the great end of all religious worship is attained. This is indeed the beauty of holiness; these are the genuine fruits of devotion, the noblest triumphs of religion, the best oblations of the heart, the sacrifices with which God is well pleased. The external acts and modes of worship are only instrumental duties that point to something better; they are, as it were, the outworks and fences of religion; they are the avenues that lead to the holy of holies, the sanctuary of the pure and upright mind, which is the true temple of the deity.

And of that great being who is the sole object of our homage and worship, we must study to acquire just and honourable sentiments. We must believe that he is, and that he is the faithful and liberal rewarder of virtue, and the patron of all wise and virtuous men. We must believe that he is one, and that besides him there is no God. We must consider that he is good, and that his goodness extends to all his works: he is light, and in him is no darkness at all: he is love, and the clemency of his nature is the foundation of all our confidence and hope. We must accordingly cultivate the most worthy and exalted notions of the unity and eternity of his nature, of his irresistible

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power and unerring wisdom, of his universal presence, his infinite knowledge, his superintending providence, and his condescending regard to the minutest concerns of all the various orders of created beings. In short, we must remember that “ God is a spirit ; ” and we shall find that just and rational ideas of his nature and attributes will lead us to “ worship him in spirit and in truth,” to offer unto him the true and spiritual homage of the heart.

Such is the purity, simplicity, and spirituality of the true christian worship. Such is the worship which was prescribed by Jesus Christ ; and which, therefore, in conformity to his instructions and to the model he hath given us, it is the duty of those who are appointed to lead the devotions of others, to inculcate upon their fellow-worshippers. There is indeed an external propriety, decorum and solemnity to be studiously observed by us in performing the public offices of religion. The admonition of the wise man may here, with some accommodation, be generally applied : “ Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God ; and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools.” But it is requisite, above all other things, that the heart be right with God ; for it is the heart which he principally regards. We must take care that our devotions be free from error, idolatry, and hypocrisy, from all enthusiastical

stical and superstitious observances. Nor must we lay so much stress on the external forms of religion, as may lead us to treat those who see reason to adopt a different mode of worship from ourselves, with unchristian bigotry and intolerance, on account of any speculative or practical differences that subsist between us. And finally, christians, we must look forward to that bright and happy period, when all party distinctions shall cease; when external forms shall be abolished, and the shadow shall give way to the substance; when that which is perfect shall come, and that which is in part shall be done away; when we shall no longer worship God in this or that particular church, or society of christians; but shall serve him day and night in that glorious and celestial temple, from whence they go no more out.

I cannot close this discourse without adverting to the particular situation in which I am now, for the first time, placed before you, as the successor of your late worthy and excellent pastor, Dr. Kippis:—a name, which cannot be mentioned without exciting in your breasts, as well as my own, the heartfelt emotions of friendship, veneration, and regret; a name, which will be remembered in the world as long as manly abilities, solid learning, sterling worth,

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and unaffected benevolence shall continue to retain a place in the esteem of mankind. In him, the personal virtues and talents of the man were so admirably blended with the acquirements of the scholar, and the elevated sentiments and principles of the christian, as to constitute a rare, valuable, and accomplished character. In him, science has lost an ornament, religious liberty and truth an able advocate, and humanity a disinterested friend. You, indeed, need no remembrancer of what he was. After a connection of three and forty years, if there be any amongst you who can look back to that early period of his ministry, to you I appeal—but not to you alone; for I am persuaded that there is no one in this congregation, of whatever age or standing, to whom I may not appeal—for the unfeigned testimony of your affectionate regard. You well know how acceptable and instructive his conversation was rendered by his various and extensive knowledge, by his acquaintance with general literature and the world, by his communicative temper; by his suavity of manners, and his native dignity of deportment. You know how unblameably and how consistently he conducted himself among you as a faithful pastor, as a zealous, and sympathising friend; how assiduously and affectionately he exhorted

exhorted you to “ walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.”

Although his character has already, from this pulpit, been more fully and more ably drawn, yet I trust it will not be thought irrelevant to the subject upon which I have this day addressed you, that I have embraced the opportunity which so naturally presented itself, of paying this sincere tribute of respect to the memory of a man, whom we all revered, and whose loss we now deplore : But who, “ though dead, yet speaks” to you in the living page of his writings ; whose admonitions are engraved on the tablet of your memories ; whose example is yet fresh in your recollection ; whose memorial still lives in your hearts.

The peculiar circumstances under which I stand before this congregation, will be my only apology for making myself, in any degree, the subject of this address. As you have, with the greatest unanimity, requested me to succeed our late venerable friend, in the capacity of your minister ; and as I have done myself the honour to accept your united invitation for this purpose ; you will now permit me to say, that it will be my earnest desire and my ambition to walk, though with unequal steps, in the path in which he walked, and to follow him in the pastoral labours

labours of this moral and spiritual vineyard, as far as he followed our divine instructor, and our only infallible guide. If my labours be less abundant or less meritorious than his, " who was a workman that needed not to be ashamed," yet I shall truly aim to discharge the trust you have reposed in me with diligence and industry, and with the utmost fidelity and zeal: my best exertions shall not be wanting to promote a cause which I revere, the cause of truth, liberty, virtue, and humanity. This has been my business, and my pleasure in the connection which I have just quitted, and in which my services were I trust, not unacceptable, and, under the direction of providence, not wholly in vain. In regard to that respectable congregation, of whose esteem I shall retain a sincere and lasting remembrance, no difference in speculative opinions ever interrupted the harmony and friendship which subsisted between us during the whole time of my ministrations among them. The unrestrained right of private judgment, and an unlimited freedom in all matters of religion and conscience, were mutually understood, and mutually asserted and maintained between the congregation and the minister, without the slightest infringement of the claims of christian charity and benevolence.

Upon the same manly and christian principles I would wish to conduct myself, with as much consistency as I am able, in that new and interesting relation into which I am now entering. The cause in which we are embarking together, is a common cause, in which we are all of us, both minister and people, equally concerned. It has for its object, our common usefulness, integrity and honour, both as individuals and as a religious society ; and the virtue and happiness of mankind in general, as far as it lies in our power, in our respective stations, to promote these important ends. I have therefore great confidence in your co-operations ; since we are in fact co-adjutors of each other in the same virtuous and benevolent undertaking : Our duties are reciprocal ; and our satisfaction, I trust, will be reciprocal and lasting.

Discouragement, indeed, we must expect ; difficulties will arise ; but we must be prepared to meet them with fortitude and courage. The times grow dark, and do not promise to befriend us. But, amidst the threatening aspects and the wild commotions of the world, miseries that wring and agonize the heart, and sufferings at the bare recital of which humanity weeps ; amidst all the gloom that surrounds us, our troubled minds may find repose and security in the over-

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ruling providence of God. On him let us rely with unbounded confidence and hope. The faith of the gospel may droop for a while; and its pure morality may seem to languish with it. Such is the restless activity of the human mind, the fluctuation of opinions, and the derangement of prevailing systems, that christianity itself may suffer a temporary detriment. The rude hand which attempts to remove the rubbish of error and superstition that has long deformed the beauty of the fabric, may slightly impair the edifice: But it will at length rise more fair, more perfect, more simple and majestic than ever. Discussion will produce conviction; and argument will terminate in a rational, complete, and permanent system of religion. Then let us not give way to despondency and fear. The cloud will be dispersed, and we shall again rejoice in a clear atmosphere and a bright and serene sky. Let this glorious hope reanimate our zeal. In our sphere of usefulness, let us redouble our united endeavours. And though we are not able to command success, yet we may rest assured, that no effort will be lost; our labour shall not be finally in vain; nor shall we spend our strength for nought: Our mite will be accepted, as the humble offering of an upright mind. While our exertions are sincere and unremitting, we shall be fellow-labourers with

God

God himself, whose grand object it is in all his dispensations, by promoting the virtue, to advance the happiness of mankind. And we know that he is not unrighteous to forget our work and labour of benevolence and love.

Let us, therefore, my christian brethren, " shew diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end." Let us now wait in humble and earnest expectation of that perfect day of meridian splendor and unfading glory, which will prove the joyful consummation of our wishes and our hopes. And, at length, may we be received into the regions of eternal purity and truth, where "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." Amen.

F T N I S.

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